CHENREZIG LORD OF LOVE

Principles and Methods of Deity Meditation

Bokar Rinpoche

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Preface

Deity meditation is perhaps the least understood of all practices within Tibetan Buddhism. Yet the use of visualized images in mental and spiritual development forms the heart of this practice. For over a thousand years monks, nuns, and mountain yogins have developed and perfected this unique style of meditation.

Recently many exiled Tibetan masters have been actively teaching in Western countries. These teachers have very generously shared their contemplative knowledge and experience, including instructions for deity meditation. A small but growing number of people have attempted to practice these teachings. For most this has not been an easy path. Many feel there is something here very precious and valuable but difficult to approach. For a person not raised in the sphere of Tibetan culture fruitful practice of deity meditation requires a sound understanding of its basic intention and principles.

Bokar Rinpoche in this small volume directly addresses the concerns of Westerners venturing into the lofty, yet sometimes confusing world of deity meditation. He clearly sets forth the principles and theory of this meditation using a minimum of technical terminology and then gives instructions for the practice of Chenrezig. With his many years of study, practice, and teaching he is uniquely qualified to present these teachings. Through his deep experience and wisdom condensed here he unfolds a world and makes possible an authentic connection with it.

Still it must be said that for those interested in pursuing this practice, a book is not a substitute for contact with a living teacher. The Buddha Sakyamuni used oral instruction as the basic vehicle of teaching and all Buddhist meditative lineages have continued this custom. Many dharma centers can now be found throughout the world where one may receive qualified guidance for the practices discussed in this book.

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Introduction to the French Edition

Buddhism is often seen as a nonreligious tradition that is readily classified in the domain of metaphysics or philosophy, or considered to be a way of life. The type of Buddhism called "Tibetan" does not easily accord with this view. One sometimes looks with a certain wariness at its procession of deities (the *yidams),* the pure lands where they dwell, and the apparently mythological stories that refer to them.

The Tibetans themselves, however, do not see in these deities anything that contradicts Buddhism. As they were part of the *Vajrayana* taught by the Buddha and then secretly transmitted in India before spreading to Tibet, their orthodoxy is not doubted by the Tibetans. These deities are in perfect accord with the original teaching.

Nevertheless, it is true that the deities can be understood at different levels. Lay Tibetans conceive of them as superior beings dwelling in the heavens, watching over the destiny of the humans who pray to them; whereas for masters of the dharma, they are multiple expressions of a unique awakening from which our mind is not separated. The latter point of view undoubtedly ('orn'sponds to Buddhism in the strictest sense, but the former, as a skillful means to help beings, should not be completely rejected.

In the first chapter of this book, Bokar Rinpoche discusses these points clearly. He describes the nature of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara in SanskriO, the most popular deity of Tibet and the one most known in the West. To follow what he is saying, however, it is important to understand the two levels of Buddhist teachings: the literal meaning and the definitive meaning of reality.

The literal meaning designates everything that allows us to approach ultimate truth, while not exposing it directly. This level of meaning takes into account the intellectual possibilities of individuals and their psychic make-up. Explanations, images, methods of meditation, mythical aspects, and so forth belong in this domain.

On the other hand, definitive meaning, for instance the *mahamudra,* directly expresses the ultimate truth.

It is necessary to see, however, that the literal meaning is not in opposition to definitive meaning. The literal meaning is a part of the definitive meaning, approximates it and has a pedagogical value. We should consider it to be a little like the reality that is the sky and the different descriptions of it by a painter, poet, meteorologist, school teacher, or astrophysicist. These descriptions are not wrong, but partial. The sky is a reality more vast than any of these descriptions and beyond them, but this fact does not make these partial descriptions invalid.

The definitive meaning and the literal meaning are not in opposition to each other and are not mutually exclusive. It is necessary to grasp the subtle or contradictory play of their relationship in order to understand the link between the mind and the deity.

In addition to questioning the nature of the deity, Westerners often ask about the functioning of a meditation such as Chenrezig. How does the visualization of a deity and the recitation of a mantra affect the mind? The reader will find in the second chapter an extremely interesting exposition on this matter that clarifies the process of purifying unconscious conditioning and developing the potential of awakening.

The following chapters describe this specific method of meditation and the way in which to apply it to the different circumstances of daily life. On the latter point, Bokar Rinpoche wanted to give instructions at the deepest level--the one of *mahamudra.* The reader will find here a great richness but also, perhaps, some difficulty!

Most of the teachings gathered in this book were given privately by Bokar Rinpoche. This way of working allowed us to approach and make precise many facets of the teachings that the general framework of a public lecture usually does not permit. This means that one can read in the French text explanations that are not given elsewhere.

Francois Jacquemart

Nature of the Deity

ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE CHENREZIG

Lord with a white body unstained by defects,
The perfect Buddha is the ornament on your head.
You look with compassion on all beings,
Before you, Chenrezig, I bow down.

Thus a famous praise is addressed to the most popular deity of Tibet.

Who *really* is Chenrezig, deity with a white body and four, sometimes one thousand, arms? Who is this deity for whom the Tibetans nourish a special devotion and whose meditation is now also practiced by many Westerners?

Is it a luminous god, soft and compassionate, who, far from the heavens, keeps watch over the fate of beings, as most Tibetan people believe? Is it a simple symbolic image as Westernerssometimes think? Is it still another reality, deeper and richer?

First we need to understand that Chenrezig is both an appearance, the divine manifestation as well as an essence, the inner reality, with one not excluding or contradicting the other. The appearance of Chenrezig is the symbol of his essence made manifest. Through this appearance we can approach the

essence of Chenrezig. The appearance does not exhaust the essence anymore than the essence negates the apearance. To pretend that Chenrezig only has an existence outside ourselves would be a mistake. But it would also be a mistake to see him only as an abstraction. Grasping the link between the two aspects of the deity (appearance and essence) is necessary in order to understand both his nature and meditation.

First, who is Chenrezig in *essence?*

Chenrezig is the mode of being of the mind that is the union of emptiness and compassion. From the viewpoint of the definitive meaning Chenrezig is the ultimate nature of the mind. In other words, one may say that Chenrezig is *Bhodhicitta* in its two aspects:

- Absolute *bodhicitta* corresponding to emptiness
- Relative *bodhicitta* corresponding to compassion.

When the nature of the mind is described, one most often uses the terms emptiness and clarity rather than emptiness and compassion as we just did. In fact, clarity and compassion are one and the same; they designate the dynamic expression of the mind. Many synonyms are used to describe these two indissolubly united aspects:

- emptiness and compassion
- knowledge and means
- absolute aspect and relative aspect
- mode of being and mode of manifestation, and so on.

Whatever words one uses for it, Chenrezig appears from this same reality. He is the awakened nature of each being's own mind, the love and compassion primordially present in the *dharmakaya.*

Chenrezig is within us because love and compassion are not qualities added to the mind. These qualities are part of the awakened state even if, for the moment, this state exists only as a potential for us.

The different degrees of love and compassion that we can observe from one being to another correspond to a greater or smaller actualization of this potential, and to the influence in greater or lesser degree of Chenrezig in ourselves. But one cannot say that any being is totally without love and compassion, because this would deny in that being the awakened nature common to all beings. Merely, the veils covering the mind can temporarily be so thick that the latent qualities cannot express themselves at all.

The fundamental dysfunctioning of our mind takes the form of a separation between I and other. We falsely grasp at an “I” on which attachment grafts itself at the same time as we conceive of an "other" that is the basis of aversion. This duality prevents the free and spontaneous expression of love and compassion and holds them in a potential state. The result of this is that, instead of wishing for the happiness of beings, we wish for our own happiness. Instead of aspiring to the

removal of their suffering, we aspire to the removal of our own suffering. Instead of rejoicing in the happiness of others, we rejoice in our own happiness. Instead of looking equally on all beings, we become involved in games of preference and partiality. Therefore, "our" Chenrezig remains hidden.

Saying that Chenrezig is the ultimate nature of the mind does not negate his form manifestation. The essence expresses itself through an appearance. Chenrezig exists on the level of definitive meaning and also on the level of literal meaning where he appears in the form of the deity by which he is usually known. He is the visible expression taken by all the buddhas to help us activate the love and compassion that are presently only a potential in us and to reveal the ultimate Chenrezig in ourselves. Even his name expresses his nature; each syllable that composes it in Tibetan has a meaning:

- *chen* means eye;
- *re* gives an idea of continuity;
- *zig* means to look.

Therefore *Chenrezig* is the one who "continually looks upon all beings with the eye of compassion."

The relationship between Chenrezig as the potential of compassion in our mind and Chenrezig appearing as a divine form is the real foundation of the practice:

- On one hand, Chenrezig as a manifested deity is charged with and transmits the power of the grace and compassion of the mind of all buddhas;

- On the other hand, our own mind is endowed with the potentiality of love and compassion;

- Thirdly, the ineluctable interconnection that links everything causes the first factor to necessarily act on the second one and reveal it.

Without the potentiality of our mind the deity remains an external, beautiful, and luminous but ineffectual appearance. Without the deity our potential remains ineffective. This is from the point of view of the path. However, from the point of view of the ultimate awakening beyond the notions of external and internal and beyond any duality, no difference exists any longer between the deity and our own mind that is itself buddha.

When we do the meditation of Chenrezig, if we see love and compassion grow in our mind, it is a sign that our practice is fruitful. The relative Chenrezig is then a support to develop the absolute Chenrezig who always dwells within us. Understanding that Chenrezig is never in reality separated from us and that he is inherent in our mind allows us to deeply penetrate the practice.

We need the relative Chenrezig to realize the ultimate Chenrezig. The meditation on the form and attributes of the deity and the recitation of his *mantra* brings us to the realization of the compassion present in our own mind that is also emptiness. The power of grace transmitted by the relative Chenrezig leads us to the absolute nature of our own mind whose dynamic is love and compassion.

COMPASSION

Chenrezig and compassion are, as we have just seen, the same reality. The Great Compassionate One is the form taken by the dynamic of the formless mind. One should therefore understand the nature of love and compassion.

We must first appreciate how fortunate we are to have a human existence. If we compare our greatest sufferings or gravest difficulties to those animals endure, we will see that our condition is not nearly as painful as theirs. When, for instance, an animal is sick, its physical suffering is the same as that of a human who falls sick, but the animal has no means to lessen its pain; it cannot describe it, it has neither a physician nor medicine on which to rely. When it is exposed to great cold or intense heat, it does not have any means of protecting itself. When one imposes on it the hardest work, the animal has no freedom to refuse. Whereas humans, even the poorest and most impoverished, have a small measure of freedom with which they can attempt to find the means that will improve their lot.

Most people, however, only see their own suffering and lament ceaselessly about themselves: "How much I suffer! How long is the sickness! How painful my condition! How great our difficulties!" They never think of considering the suffering of others, even if this suffering, as in the case of animals, is much greater and more intense than their own.

When we do not understand the suffering of others, we perform many acts that are harmful. Because of their negative characteristics, these acts will bring suffering into our future lives though we certainly would not wish it.

In Buddhism in general and more particularly in the great vehicle, the simple fact of being conscious of others' suffering and difficulties is seen as a very beneficial inner attitude as this allows love and compassion to be bom in us naturally.

Love and compassion are two closely related notions. They are, however, distinguished according to one's point of view: obtaining happiness or suppressing suffering.

First, love is the wish for beings to have happiness both in the present and in the future. The karmic cause of happiness is positive acts of body, speech, and mind. Happiness in future lives depends on the use we make of our present life. Love therefore not only wishes for the happiness of others in this life but also that others establish the foundation for happiness in the future through positive conduct.

Compassion, on the other hand, takes suffering as the point of reference. It is the wish that beings can be immediately free of the suffering that is the result of past negative acts and that they do not create the causes of future suffering by negative activity in the present.

The happiness of others, now and in the future, and the cessation of the suffering of others, now and in the future, should be a cause of deep joy.

Equanimity is another important point. We usually divide our relationships with others into three categories: those toward whom we have sympathy or affection, those toward whom we feel antipathy or hatred, and those toward whom we are indifferent. The two latter categories are more important than the first one. We must rid ourselves of this habit and exercise looking at all beings with the same love we have for our mother or for our dearest friend. We should be without partiality and not make any exceptions.

Love, compassion, joy, and equanimity constitute the "four immeasurables" that are the very core of *mahayana* practice. When these four attitudes penetrate our mind and guide our way of thinking, talking, and acting, this is called *bodhicitta.*

It is possible that *bodhicitta,* the fundamental aspiration for the benefit of others, is a natural disposition in the mind of some people, but most of the time we tum toward ourselves and think in a very narrow way. What is our implicit aspiration? "May I, myself, be free of the suffering and the causes of suffering! What a joy for me to be forever gone from suffering and possess eternal happiness! So and so are my friends, so and so are my enemies, and as for the others, I do not care at all!"

And more: "For me, happiness; for me, what is agreeable; for me, what is good; for me, what is beautiful; for me, what is precious ... " By the strong attachment that links us to the "me" we turn our back on love and we close ourselves into a deeper and deeper duality: "For me, good fortune and for my enemy, bad fortune; for me, what is good and for my enemy, what is bad; for me, beauty and for my enemy, ugliness; for me, what is agreeable and for my enemy, what is disagreeable; for me, victory and gain and for my enemy, defeat and loss!"

These interests in ourself and the rejection or ignorance of others drive us to commit many negative acts.

When, on the other hand, the "four immeasurables" dwell within us, we corne to naturally avoid all that could harm others and are naturally led to accomplish their benefit. Then we give happiness to others and at the same time create the foundation of our own happiness in the future. This is a benefit for ourself as much as for others.

To generate the qualities of *bodhicitta* that are not yet awakened in our mind and to continue to develop and not decrease the qualities that are not yet blooming, the strongest method is certainly the meditation on Chenrezig.

Bodhicitta permeates all of the practices of the *Mahayana* and should be regarded as an invaluable treasure. Atisa was one of the greatest masters of India who helped to propagate Buddhism in Tibet. Every time he said the name of one of his masters from whom he had received teachings he joined hands at the heart level as a sign of respect, devotion, and gratitude. However, when he said the name of Serlingpa-one of his teachers, he joined hands above his head. Surprised by this difference, one day some disciples asked him the reason. They asked him if he meant to signify by this that Serlingpa was superior to the others. Atisa explained, "This is not the reason; all the

masters from whom I received teachings were equally perfect, but it is because of Serlingpa that *bodhicitta* was born in my mind. It is a sign of gratitude for this extraordinary gift that I join my hands above my head when I say his name."

Many people in Tibet sought out Atisa to request teachings on the deep meaning of emptiness, the theories of *madhyamika,* and the *vajrayana.* He invariably answered that it was not possible to understand emptiness or to practice *vajrayana* before one has developed *bodhicitta.* Therefore he always taught *bodhicitta.*

Commencing the practice of love and compassion is not always easy because we do not yet have much power to help others. Being aware of our inability to bring effective help in many instances should not, however, be a cause for discouragement. In any case, we can at least make prayers and wishes for those who suffer and in particular, we should wish to be able to help them in the future. In this way we will nourish our *bodhicitta* and progressively gain the ability to truly help others.

It can happen that despite good will and the help we sincerely attempt to offer; we are repaid by a discontented and hostile attitude. We then definitely risk entering a chain reaction of aggressiveness and we may tell ourselves that we will not again help someone who reacts to our generosity in that manner. It is necessary to understand the workings of the situation in order to not act contrary to compassion. The person who manifests hostility toward us in the face of our positive intention does not act freely. He is under the sway of ignorance, *karma,* and the conflicting emotions that prevent him from acting differently for the moment. Although we have the feeling he could have acted differently, he did not choose to do that. As Santideva said:

> *I am not angry*
>
> *About a sickness that makes me suffer.*
>
> *Why therefore should I have anger for others?*
>
> *They, too, are under the influence of conditions (that make them act in this manner).*

Understanding the lack of freedom within others when they are aggressive prevents us from rejecting them in turn. We will, on the contrary, have much more compassion for them and will wish that, even if we cannot help them now, we will be able to help in the future.

A mother who has several children loves them all with the same love and gives the same attention and care to all of them. It can happen, however, that one of the children, due to sickness or some passing difficulty, shows aggressiveness toward her in spite of the care and kindness she gives to him. Perhaps he may even insult or attempt to beat her. It is not impossible. Nevertheless, the mother will not think, "This is no longer my child; I do not want to take care of him; I will not do anything for him./f On the contrary, she understands that his reactions are caused by sickness or other circumstances. She has yet more love for him, endures with patience his rebuffs, and wishes

to be able to help him when it is possible. When we are exposed to the unjustified aggressiveness of others, we should have this same attitude.

We certainly do not now have perfect love and compassion. This is normal because we are ordinary beings. We should consider the acquisition of love and compassion as an apprenticeship and progression. It is like a child going to school who first learns to read and then little by little, as he goes to higher classes, assimilates new knowledge based on knowledge previously acquired.

We should not nourish any doubt concerning the possibilities of developing love and compassion. They are not ideas existing outside ourselves, but as we saw in the section on the absolute Chenrezig, these qualities exist now in our mind in a perfect but latent manner. Given the infallible interdependence of all phenomena, it is certain that our relative and actual apprenticeship will bring the realization of these potential qualities.

Compassion wants us to wish that we will liberate all beings from *samsara,* yet the enormity of this wish sometimes makes it seem impossible. Up to now we have not succeeded in getting ourselves out of *samsara,* so of what use is it to dream of getting others out! Nevertheless it is precisely this noble and courageous attitude that will lead us to our own liberation. When we have obtained awakening, this will be the dynamic that allows us to help others. Even now this attitude generates great benefits. It decreases our own suffering and enables us at present to relieve the suffering of others.

Without *bodhicitta,* that is without love and compassion, every other practice, no matter how deep it may apper, is not a path to awakening: neither *shi nay* (mental calmmg) nor meditations on deities nor exercises on subtle channels and energies.

Westerners today have many techniques that allow them to do wonderful things. Humans can fly in space, move under the sea, reproduce and transmit pictures and words, go long distances in a short time, and do more than one could imagine in the past. But no one could have invented and made use of these things if electricity had not been discovered and used. Without electricity everything would stop; machines would become immobile and useless objects.

Bodhicitta is the electricity of spiritual practice. If it is cut, nothing works anymore. On the other hand, with *bodhicitta,* the phases of creation and completion of deities become a true path to awakening; meditation on emptiness becomes a path to awakening; and concentration on the subtle winds and channels becomes a path to awakening. Animated with *bodhicitta,* all ordinary activity, all works in the world become a path to awakening.

Someone who has all the intelligence and science of the world but lacks love and compassion can never truly accomplish anything beneficial for others. But one who has love and compassion deeply within himself will accomplish benefit for others in everything he does.

THE PRESENCE OF CHENREZIG

Chenrezig, as the expression of compassion of all buddhas and of our own mind, must be present among humans who are suffering. This presence takes multiple forms whose variety is much greater than we may first imagine.

In Tibet some high lamas were originally considered emanations of Chenrezig (the last chapter contains the biographies of some of them). For instance, the Dalai Lamas and the Karmapas were prophesied as such in many *termas,* the texts hidden by Padmasambhava. In addition, a lama like Kalu Rinpoche can be considered as an emanation of the Lord of Great Compassion, even if he did not specifically identify himself in this way. He had a very deep practice of meditation, took Chenrezig as one of his main *yidams,* taught meditation on Chenrezig to his disciples, and established it as a regular practice in the many Dharma centers he founded in the West and South-east Asia.

The manifestation of Chenrezig on earth does not, however, limit himself to Tibet, to the Buddhist world, or to lamas. Names and forms are not signs of his manifestation at all. His emanations can be Buddhist or non-Buddhist, ordained or lay people, men or women, Easterners or Westerners, kings or beggars.

Every person whose heart is moved by love and compassion, who deeply and sincerely acts for the benefit of others without concern for fame, profit, social position, or recognition expresses the activity of Chenrezig. Love and compassion are the true signs revealing the presence of Chenrezig.

Bodhisattvas are beings who have no other motivation than compassion which is the ultimate meaning of Chenrezig. In some prayers of the Bodhisattvas, one sometimes finds the wish to become a ship, a bridge, medicine, a physician, and so forth. In the Bodhisattvacaryavatara, for instance, Santideva says the following:

> *May I be a protector for those who do not have one,*
>
> *A guide for travelers on the road,*
>
> *A bridge or ship or raft,*
>
> *For those who want to cross the water.*
>
> *May I be an island for those who look for it,*
>
> *A lamp for those who wish to have light,*
>
> *A bed for those who need rest,*
>
> *A servant for those who want a servant.*

Behind the somewhat startling nature of these wishes, one should see the compassionate mind of the bodhisattvas, ready to manifest in any form beneficial for beings. If it is beneficial for a ship to cross the sea, the bodhisattva takes the form of a ship. If it is beneficial for a bridge to span a river, he manifests himself in the form of a bridge. If a virulent sickness affects humans, the bodhisattva wishes to become

the medicine that cures it, the physician who knows how to prescribe it, and the nurse who helps the sick one.

The mind of Chenrezig can work in the form of a human, an animal, a plant, or an inert thing. His mind is dlways the expression of compassion.

Chenrezig can also manifest in the form of a person whose activity will appear to be negative but whose goal will be in fact to turn others toward a positive attitude. There is a story of two monks from a faraway country who wanted to meet the king of Tibet, Songtsen Campo, because they had heard he was an emanation of Chenrezig. When they arrived in Lhasa, however, they learned that many people had been executed and several put into jail, all by order of the king. The monks thought that these acts could not come from an actual emanation of Chenrezig. Scared, they decided to flee as soon as possible, but the king had learned of their arrival and abrupt departure and sent emissaries to look for them. When the king understood the reasons for their flight, he explained to them that in reality he did not kill or molest anyone. He told the monks that Tibetans were rough and wild people, little inclined to laws and rules of society that protected the interests of all. Therefore, to lead them to more temperance without harming them he created magical emanations in the form of thieves and burglars whose illusory example of punishment encouraged the respect for laws and others. The king was indeed an emanation of Chenrezig. He manifested his powers in apparently negative acts but they were only an expression of his compassion.

Wherever there is compassion, in whatever form it takes, there is Chenrezig.

THE GENESIS OF CHENREZIG

From an absolute point of view, Chenrezig is without origin; he exists primordially. However, from the relative point of view, there is a beginning of his manifestation in the realm of phenomena. The description given here of this manifestation is a summary of the more extensive teaching found in a text called the *Mani Khabum.*

Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light who reigns in the Land of Bliss *(Dewachen),* one day conceived that in order to help beings a deity in the form of a young man should be manifested. His right eye then emitted a beam of white light that took the form of Chenrezig. He saw the necessity of having a deity in the form of a young woman and a beam of green light sprang from his left eye giving birth to Tara.

Having been born from the eye of Amitabha, the young man miraculously appeared on a lotus. In those days there was a king called Sublime Kindness *(Zangpochok)* in the Land of Bliss. A thousand queens were his companions, but he had no son. This was his great regret, and he fervently wished for the coming of an heir. In order to fulfill his wish, he gave much of his wealth to the *dharma* and, on his shrine, presented many offerings to the Buddhas and the Three Jewels. He regularly sent a servant to the Lotus Lake lying not very far from the palace to bring back beautiful and fresh flowers for the shrine. One day, when the servant went to pick flowers, he saw a wonderful child seated on the heart of a lotus. He immediately ran to the palace and reported this to the king.

The king thought that his prayers had been fulfilled; the miraculous child could be none other than the son for whom he had wished so much. He went to the Lotus Lake with his entourage to invite the young man to come and live with him. This boy appeared to be sixteen years old; he was very handsome, white in color, and adorned with silks and jewels. He was ceaselessly saying: "Poor beings! Poor beings!"

The boy then came to live in the palace. The king called him Heart of Lotus *(Padmai Nyingpo)* because of the circumstances surrounding the boy's discovery.

Sublime Kindness wanted to know from where the young man came. He therefore went to see Amitabha and asked him whose emanation Heart of Lotus was and what was his true name.



Green Tara

"This child is an emanation of the activity of all the buddhas," answered Amitabha. "He is the one who accomplishes the benefit of all beings, the one who makes joyful the heart of all the buddhas. His name is 'Chenrezig, The Noble Sovereign.' The help that this well-born son brings to beings will be as vast as space."

When Chenrezig later looked at beings with compassion, he saw that they were covered with many karmic veils formed by the influence of desire, aversion, blindness, jealousy, and pride. Thus their sufferings were innumerable. He saw all of that and a tear dropped from each of his eyes. Tara appeared from the tear that fell from his right eye and the goddess Lhamo Trulnyerchen appeared from the tear that fell from his left eye. The two deItIes turned toward him and said, "Do not be scared. We will help you with your mission to benefit beings." Then suddenly they melted again into his eyes.



Two Arm Chenrezig

While he was in the presence of Amitabha, Chenrezig thought, "As long as there is even one being who has not attained awakening, I will strive for the benefit of all. And if I break this promise, may my head and body split into a thousand pieces!"

Amitabha understood his thought and told him, "This promise is excellent. Myself and all the buddhas of the three times, having taken such commitments, attained awakening for the benefit of all. I will help you to accomplish that which you have promised." Chenrezig's body then emitted six beams of light that produced emanations whose destiny was to act for the benefit of all in each of the six realms of being: humans, gods, demigods, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings.

He thus worked for many *kalpas.* Then, one day, he looked with the eye of knowledge from the top of mount Meru to see if he had liberated many beings and if the number of beings in *samsara* had diminished. Alas, he saw that they were still innumerable.

He was very sad. Being discouraged, he thought, "I do not have the capability to help beings; it is better that I rest in *nirvana."*

This thought contradicted his promise, and he burst into a thousand pieces and felt intense suffering.

Amitabha, by the power of his grace, reconstructed the body of Chenrezig. He gave him eleven faces and a thousand arms similar to the thousand spokes of a universal monarch's wheel and a thousand eyes, symbolic of the thousand buddhas of the present *kalpa.* Chenrezig could henceforth help the beings in this form as well as with his other forms of two or four arms. Amitabha asked Chenrezig to retake his promise with still more vigor than before and then transmitted to him the six syllable mantra: OM MANI PADME HUNG.

This is the history of Chenrezig's manifestation in the relative domain.



Thousand Arm Chenrezig

THE LAND OF BLISS AND THE POTALA

The Potala is mainly known as the palace of Lhasa that, until the Chinese invasion, served as the residence of the Dalai Lamas. However, the Potala of Lhasa received its name from the heavenly Potala, the mountain on the top of which Chenrezig dwells. The earthly Potala is a reflection of the celestial Potala. The edifice of Lhasa was originally called the "Potala" because the king, Songtsen Campo, who ordered its construction in the seventh century was looked upon as an emanation of Chenrezig, as the Dalai Lamas would be later.

Although the palace of Chenrezig as an emanation is the celestial Potala, he also dwells in the Land of Bliss *(Dewachen).* He will succeed Amitabha when Amitabha goes to other pure lands. Consequently, at the end of meditation, one prays to be reborn in the Land of Bliss.

The Land of Bliss and the Potala are in different places. The Land of Bliss is in the west and extremely far away from our world while the Potala is in the south and much closer. It is from there in particular that Chenrezig keeps watch over the earth.

These considerations only make sense in the context of the literal meaning. From the point of view of definitive meaning, the manifestations of buddhas and their pure lands are “of the same taste.” One cannot apply the notions of multiplicity or unity to them.

In truth, the lands of pure manifestation, such as the Land of Bliss, are none other than the authentic luminosity of the buddhas' mind. Being manifested, they do not have an objective reality from the point of view of awakening; they are beyond the concepts of subject and object. It is the mode of non-dual appearance that one calls "authentic luminosity."

We do not now have the capability to see the pure lands. Turning our mind toward them, however, and praying to be reborn there creates a purifying tendency that, combined with the strength of the buddhas' wishes and powers of grace, effectively allows us to take rebirth there after death.

The experience that one has there differs both from the experience we now have and the experience of a buddha. The appearances that we perceive in a pure realm do not have the same structure as those of ordinary matter; they have a pure nature. Everything is beautiful, all sound is harmonious, all smell is agreeable, and so on. There the conflicting emotions and suffering are absent. Nevertheless, we remain in a relation of subject to object; we do not experience the non-dual purity. To obtain that, we must continue to receive teachings, meditate, and practice in the pure land. We have gone from the sufferings of the state of ordinary being, but we have not yet attained the ultimate non-duality: buddhahood.

Generally, to be reborn in the pure lands, it is first necessary to have obtained the level of the first ground of a bodhisattva, a very high level of realization. On this level one already possesses the direct vision of ultimate reality. To be born in the Land of Bliss, it is not required to have obtained such a level. One may be reborn and live there without having obtained the first ground. This is possible because of the special strength of Amitabha Buddha's compassion and wishes. It is said that if the aspiration, devotion, and trust are very great even a person who has committed many negative acts can be reborn in the Land of Bliss. It is also the place where very high beings such as Khyungpo Naljor, the founder of the Shangpa lineage, may manifest after this life. Whatever it is, it is a state of no-return. Once one has taken birth there, it is not possible to fall again into the worlds of *samsara.*

THE MANTRA "OM MANI PADME HUNG"

Mantras are a sound manifestation coming from emptiness. They are the authentic sound of emptiness.

From the point of view of the absolute truth and of emptiness itself, the *mantra* does not have any existence. There is neither sound nor *mantra.* Sounds and *mantras,* as with all other forms of manifestation, are located in the relative realm that arises from emptiness. In the relative realm, sounds, although devoid of their own entity, have the power to designate, name, and act on the mind. When, for instance, someone tells us "You are a fine person" or "You are very disagreeable," the words "fine" or "disagreeable" are not "things." They are only sounds that are not either "fine" or "disagreeable" in themselves, but simply evoke the thoughts of "fine" and "disagreeable" and produce an effect on our mind. Similarly, in the relative domain *mantras* are endowed with an infallible power of action.

Mantras are very often the names of buddhas, bodhisattvas, or deities. For instance, OM MANI PADME HUNG is a way of naming Chenrezig. From an absolute point of view, Chenrezig does not have a name, but he is designated by names in the domain of the relative or literal meaning. These names are the vector of his compassion, grace, and the strength of the wishes he makes for the benefit of beings. In this way the recitation of his name transmits these qualities of his mind. Herein lies the explanation for the beneficial power of his *mantra,* which is also his name.

As we assimilate ourselves to our own name and are at one with it, in the same way, on the relative level, the *mantra* is identical with the deity. They form a single reality. When one recites the *mantra,* this is not other than the deity himself. By reciting the *mantra,* one receives the grace of the deity; by visualizing the deity, one receives the same grace without any difference.

The *mantra* OM MANI PADME HUNG sometimes gives rise to fanciful or mysterious translations. As we have just said, however, this is simply one name of Chenrezig placed between two sacred and traditional syllables, OM and HUNG.

- OM represents the body of all buddhas; it is also the beginning of all *mantras;*
- MANI means "jewel" in Sanskrit;
- PADME, the Sanskrit pronunciation, or PEME in Tibetan means "lotus";
- HUNG represents the mind of all buddhas and often ends *mantras.*

MANI refers to the jewel that Chenrezig holds in his two central hands and PADME to the lotus he holds in his second left hand. Saying MANI PADME names Chenrezig through his attributes: "the one who holds the jewel and the lotus." "Chenrezig" or "Jewel Lotus" are two names for the same deity.

When we recite this *mantra,* we are in fact continually repeating the name of Chenrezig. In itself this exercise may look strange. Let us suppose there is a person named Sonam Tsering and that we ceaselessly repeat his name in the manner of a *mantra:* Sonam Tsering, Sonam Tsering, Sonam Tsering, and so on. This will seem very odd and will certainly be useless. If, on the other hand, the recitation of the *mantra* OM MANI PADME HUNG has a meaning, it is because this *mantra* is invested by the grace and power of the mind of Chenrezig who himself gathers the grace and compassion of all the buddhas

and bodhisattvas. In this view, the *mantra* is endowed with the capacity to purify our mind from the veils that obscure it. The *mantra* opens the mind to love and compassion and leads it toward awakening.

The deity and the *mantra* being one in essence means that one may recite the *mantra* without necessarily doing the visualization. The recitation still retains its effectiveness.

The authentic qualities of each of the six syllables of the *mantra* are explained through many correspondences.

First, let us consider that each syllable allows us to close the door of painful rebirths in one of the six realms composing cyclic existence:

- OM closes the door of rebirths in the world of the gods *(devas),*
- MA, the door of the demigod world *(asuras),*
- NI the door of the human realm,
- PAD, the door of animal world,
- ME, the door of the hungry ghost world *(pretas),*
- HUNG, the door of the hell worlds.

Each syllable is then seen as having a genuine purifying effect:

- OM purifies the veils of body,
- MA purifies the veils of speech,
- NI purifies the veils of mind,
- PAD purifies the veils of conflicting emotions,
- ME purifies the veils of latent conditioning,
- HUNG purifies the veil that covers knowledge.

Each syllable is itself a prayer:

- OM is the prayer addressed to the body of the buddhas,
- MA the prayer addressed to the speech of the buddhas,
- NI the prayer addressed to the mind of the buddhas,
- PAD the prayer addressed to the qualities of the buddhas,
- ME the prayer addressed to the activity of the buddhas,
- HUNG gathers the grace of the body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity of buddhas.

The six syllables correspond to the six *paramitas,* the six transcendental perfections:

- OM corresponds to generosity,
- MA, to ethics,
- NI, to patience,
- PAD, to diligence,
- ME, to concentration,
- HUNG, to wisdom.

The six syllables are also related to the six buddhas reigning over the six buddha families:

- OM corresponds to Ratnasambhava,
- MA, to Amoghasiddhi,
- NI, to Vajradhara,
- PAD, to Vairocana,
- ME, to Amitabha,
- HUNG, to Akshobya.

Lastly, one links them to the six wisdoms:

- OM = wisdom of equanimity,
- MA = wisdom of activity,
- NI = the wisdom born of itself,
- PAD = the wisdom of *dharmadhatu,*
- ME = discriminating wisdom,
- HUNG = mirror-like wisdom.

In Tibet, the *mantra* of Chenrezig was recited by everybody. Its popularity and simplicity, rather than lessening its greatness, conferred on it an even greater value. This was expressed in a humorous saying:

> *At the beginning, no suffering in not knowing it,*
>
> *In the middle, no pride in knowing it,*
>
> *At the end, no fear of forgetting it.*

Ignorance of logic$_{t}$ medicine, astrologyt and other sciences is painful because one must spend much energy and effort and accept much fatigue to learn them. A few seconds$_{t}$ however, are sufficient to learn Chenrezig^{t} s *mantra.* No suffering has to be faced in going from ignorance to knowledge of it. This is why, Át the beginning$_{t}$ no suffering in not knowing it."

After one has spent many years acquiring a difficult science and has obtained fame or social position$_{t}$ one risks being self-satisfied and believing oneself superior to others. The simplicity of Chenrezig's *mantra* puts this danger to rest. Therefore$_{t}$ "In the middle, no pride in knowing it."

Last, if we do not maintain it the knowledge that we have accumulated in medicine, astrology, or other sciences may be lost little by little. It is impossible not to remember the six syllable *mantra,* OM MANI PADME HUNG. Therefore, "At the end$_{t}$ no fear of forgetting it."

Principles of the Meditation

FROM IMPURE TO PURE

The *dharma* is a method that enables us to go from the state of ordinary being to the state of awakened being, called buddhahood. One can only know the significance of *dharma* and its deep purpose if one understands it as a process whose principles are expressed in these terms of purification:

- base of purification,
- object of purification,
- purifying agent,
- result of purification.

The Base of Purification

The true nature of our own mind is *mind in itself,* similar to the mode of being of all beings' minds. As such, impurities do not stain it. It is now$_{t}$ however$_{t}$ impregnated by much temporary conditioning. This conditioning does not affect the mind's essence but produces illusion and suffering.

The essence of the mind is called the "heart of awakening." It is pure but, due to our lack of realization, the heart of awakening and the impurities are mixed together. This intermixing forms the base of purification similar to a white fabric dirtied by stains. Because its nature is whiteness, the fabric can become white again. Likewise, the nature of our mind is purity and we can rediscover it. A coal, however, has no chance of becoming white since it is originally black. If illusion, duality, and suffering were the nature of our mind, we would not have any possibility to rid ourselves of them.

The Object of Purification

The object of purification is that which must be eliminated, namely, the illusory impurities similar to the stains covering the white fabric that are not part of its nature. These impurities do not have an actual reality; this is the reason one can eliminate them. If they were endowed with an existence in itself, this would be impossible; but they are contingent, of an illusory nature, a simple mistake. Their root is the duality of "grasped-grasping." Externally, there are appearances grasped as object; internally, there is a mind as a grasping subject. This polarity causes the production of conflicting emotions (anger-aversion, desire-attachment, blindness, jealousy, possessiveness, pride, etc.) and illusory appearances from which *karma* and suffering arise. Therefore, duality, the foundation of this process must be principally eliminated.

The externally grasped objects have six aspects corresponding to the six senses:

- forms for the visual sense,
- sounds for the auditory sense,
- smells for the olfactory sense,
- taste for the gustatory sense,
- contact for the tactile sense,
- mental objects for the mental sense.

The subject, internally grasping them, is divided into six consciousnesses:

- visual consciousness,
- auditory consciousness,
- olfactory consciousness,
- gustatory consciousness,
- tactile consciousness,
- mental consciousness.

Within illusion, the mind functions in this way: six sense objects and six consciousnesses, each apprehended as a separate reality. This separation is the space in which the play of conflicting emotions takes place.

These six objects and consciousnesses are not, however, actually separate entities. For instance, while perceiving a form, although we grasp at two entities independent of each other, a perceived object and a perceiving mind, we are making an error. In reality, the form grasped as object is nothing other than the manifestation of the "clarity" aspect of the mind while the I-subject is nothing other than the "emptiness" aspect of the same mind. Within the mechanics of illusion, one

finds oneself in the situation of looking at oneself as other. It is a little like walking in the sun; our shadow is detached from us and appears as other.

The externally grasped object and the internally grasping subject who clutches it, in truth, are never separated: there is no duality. The subject and object are not two; but because we do not realize it, we enter into a duality with ourselves. This causes the play of conflicting emotions and illusory thoughts.

Therefore, one must purify oneself of this polarity of I-other.

The Purifying Agent

Different items such as water, detergent, and soap are necessary to wash a fabric covered with stains. Likewise, to purify our mind, an agent is necessary: this is the *dharma.* All its stages, all the aspects that compose it, and all the meditations taught within it, participate in this unique purifying function. Taking refuge, preliminary practices, mental calming *(shi nay)* and superior vision *(lha tong),* the *vajrayana* phases of creation and completion, and finally *mahamudra* converge on this same goal.

Through *dharma,* the conflicting emotions and the more evident illusory thoughts are first dissipated. Then, progressively, the more subtle aspects are dispersed, until finally the last obscuration, the veil that covers knowledge, is eliminated by the ultimate meditation, the "vajra-like samadhi," that leads to the final awakening.

The meditation of Chenrezig is clearly one of these agents of purification. In particular, by the thought "I am Chenrezig," called the "pride of the deity," one purifies oneself of assimilating an ordinary "I." By meditating on the body of the deity, his ornaments, his pure land, and so on, one purifies oneself from the conditioning that produces ordinary appearances. We will examine these points further on in the sections "Function of the Two Phases" and "The Three Characteristics of the Creation Phase." There we will see in detail the purifying function of Chenrezig.

The Result of Purification

When the mind is totally purified from the duality of subject-object, the fruit is revealed: realization of the nondual truth of the mind. Its nature is not different from the three bodies of awakening-the absolute body *(dharmakaya),* the body of perfect experience *(sambhogakaya),* and the body of emanation *(nirmanakaya).* These three bodies are already present in a latent state at the level of the base of purification. At the level of the result, they are actualized and revealed in their fullness and purity.

From the point of view of awakening, in fact, there is no separation, nor any notion of production, differentiation or classification. From the relative point, however, one distinguishes the three apparent modalities that are the three bodies:

- The *dharmakaya* corresponds to the emptiness aspect of the awakened mind and is therefore without form, color, and so on. This body, it is said, is obtained for one's own

benefit. By the power of the compassion and wishes of the buddhas and also by the merit of beings, the two formal bodies are manifested from the *dharmakaya.*

- The *sambhogakaya* appears to beings who have a very pure karma in the lands of manifestation different from ours. There the transmission of the *dharma* does not happen through teachings that require speech and listening. The *sambhogakaya* simply manifests itself, and the bodhisattvas who compose its entourage of disciples understand the meaning of everything that needs to be transmitted.

- The *nirmanakaya* is the manifestation of awakening in the domains of ordinary existence to guide beings with an impure *karma.* For instance, Buddha Sakyamuni who came to earth, turned the wheel of *dharma,* and by that allowed beings to enter the path of liberation.

While the two formal bodies accomplish the benefit of beings, the buddha mind does not make any effort, engender any intention, or experience any difficulty. Like the radiance of the sun, this is totally spontaneous activity, the result of previous wishes, motivation, and merit.

Although the aspects of the three bodies differ, their essence is one. We can understand that these three aspects are in essence one through an example. The moon in the sky is similar to the *dharmakaya;* its beams similar to the *sambhogakaya;* and its reflection on the surface of water is similar to the *nirmanakaya.* Although the moon, beams, and reflection look different, they are one and the same essence.

Thus, the base of purification is the mind of ordinary and impure being that is, nevertheless, endowed with the potential of awakening. The object of purification is the collection of contingent impurities caused by the polarity of subject-object. The agent of purification is the *dharma.* The result of purification is the realization of the non-dual mode of being, the actualization of awakening.

INITIATION

To be effective, every *vajrayana* meditation requires an initiation whose spiritual force is transmitted by a ritual. Without an initiation, the practice of the phases of creation and completion cannot be done or, if done, will be useless.

Depending on the classes of *tantras* and deities, initiations assume diverse aspects within the framework of more or less complex, longer or shorter rituals. Their principle, however, remains identical.

The functioning of our ordinary individuality is described through various means within Buddhism: the five elements, the five aggregates, the twelve bases of perception, and so on. These different collections are marked by duality, illusion, and suffering. In the *vajrayana,* we, however, consider their ultimate nature to be pure and divine, although now we do not realize it.

What happens during an initiation? The master who confers it by *mantras, mudras,* visualization, and meditation imposes a spiritual force and a blessing on the elements, aggregates, and bases of perception. Thereby, their divine potential, previously obscured by ignorance, is awakened. This initial impetus and the practice of the corresponding deity, enables us to completely actualize and express the divine reality of our mind.

The initiation of Chenrezig, which can be transmitted only by a master who has himself received it from an uninterrupted lineage, is composed of three principal aspects included in the same ceremony:

- The initiation of the deity's body is conferred on the disciple's body. This empowers one to visualize oneself in the form of Chenrezig as well as to view the universe as the Land of Bliss. It also allows us to meditate on the union of appearance and emptiness.
- The initiation of the deity's speech is conferred on the disciple's speech. This empowers one to recite the *mantra* OM MANI PADME HUNG as well as to consider all sounds as the *mantra,* beyond our ordinary conception of them as agreeable or disagreeable. It also allows us to meditate on the union of sound and emptiness.
- The initiation of the deity's mind is conferred on the disciple's mind. It empowers one to meditate thinking that one's mind is one with the mind of Chenrezig, who opens us to the development of love and compassion. It also allows us to meditate on the union of compassion and emptiness.

Tibetans recite the *mantra* of Chenrezig without having received the initiation, but they do it with the faith and devotion acquired since infancy. All of them look to Chenrezig as the protecting deity of their country. While walking, working, and accomplishing multiple tasks, they recite the *mantra,* sometimes without knowing how to visualize the deity. Likewise, if we trust Chenrezig, we can recite his *mantra* without having received the initiation and we will obtain some benefit from it.

As long as one considers Chenrezig outside oneself, the initiation, in fact, is not indispensable. However, to meditate on oneself in the form of the deity and to actually accomplish the phases of creation and completion, the initiation is necessary.

THE TWO PHASES OF MEDITATION IN VAJRAYANA: CREATION AND COMPLETION

Vajrayana meditations are divided into two phases: the phase of creation and the phase of completion.

The *phase of creation* refers to the first part of the meditation during which one mentally creates the appearance of the deity.

The *phase of completion* refers to the end of the meditation during which one dissolves the appearances into emptiness. One then dwells in the nature of the mind that is simultaneously an absence of thought and an experience of joy.

When a wave forms on the surface of the ocean, it may appear to be something other than the ocean. However, when it plunges, it descends back into the ocean which is its own nature. Similarly, the phases of creation and completion are in essence not separated. As with the wave and the ocean, they participate in the same nature. The phase of creation corresponds to the wave that rises up; the phase of completion to the wave that plunges back into the ocean. In both cases, it is the same mind that meditates; there are not two different realities. If one does not well understand this relationship, one may perhaps compare the phase of creation to building a house and the phase of completion to its destruction.

For beginners, both phases have, it is true, distinct aspects. We first accomplish the phase of creation during which we visualize the deity and recite the *mantra.* At the end of this phase, we do the phase of completion, dissolving all appearances into emptiness.

At a more advanced levet however, the two phases are undifferentiated. The phase of creation begins with the emptiness of mind from which one creates an image. For example, you can evoke an image of the city of Paris in your mind. You see the buildings that you know, the streets that are familiar to you, and so on. All this appears clearly. While this manifestation occurs, it is, however, empty devoid of any material reality or independent entity. This emptiness is the phase of completion. The two phases are present simultaneously. The visualized appearances are empty and even though empty, they still occur. This is the union of manifestation and emptiness.

When we visualize Chenrezig, we clearly see his face, arms, jewels, and the different colors; this is the phase of creation. At the same time, Chenrezig is without material existence; this is the phase of completion. Likewise, sounds are simultaneously sound and emptiness; thoughts are simultaneously consciousness and emptiness.

Each thought that arises in our mind actually contains in itself the two phases of creation and completion.

This is the nature of the two phases. We now will see how the meditation of Chenrezig "functions"; how it supports our spiritual progress in general, the specific contributions of the two phases, and the characteristics of the phase of creation.

GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDITATION OF CHENREZIG

The meditation of Chenrezig is not just a fragment of the *dharma;* it encompasses all aspects of the spiritual path. It is complete in itself and allows us to develop all qualities necessary for the path and the six perfections *(paramitas)* of the *Mahayana:*

- The motivation that inspires us to meditate is to become able to accomplish the benefit of beings. This is the *paramita of generosity.*
- When one accomplishes the visualization and recitation of the *mantra,* one abandons ordinary activities of body, speech, and mind. Ordinary behavior, ordinary speech, and ordinary thought are relinquished. This is the *paramita of ethics.*
- During meditation, one accepts the discomfort that body and mind sometimes experience. This is the *paramita of patience.*
- One expends a certain effort and compels oneself to persevere. This is the *paramita of diligence.*
- When the body of the deity, the pure land, the ornaments, and the syllables of the *mantra* are recognized, they are the clarity of the mind, which is the luminous manifestation of the mind in itself. This is the *paramita of transcendental wisdom.*

We can look at the function of the Chenrezig meditation in more detail. This is considered from two perspectives:

- The meditation enables one to develop aspects as varied as the elimination of illusory thoughts, accumulation of merit, compassion, devotion, mental calming, superior vision, and *mahamudra;*
- It also enables one to purify one's conditioning at the deepest level.

Let us examine each point enumerated in the first perspective:

- *Elimination of illusory thoughts:* first, visualizing the colors, clothes, and attributes of Chenrezig helps us to eliminate ordinary illusory thoughts. Second, visualizing oneself in the form of Chenrezig dissipates the construction of the illusory "I."
- *Accumulation of merit:* in the meditation one imagines that one sends out beams of light. Some beams go "up" and present offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. We also send beams "down" that spread to ordinary beings and relieve them of their suffering. These visualizations, among others, permit us to accumulate merit and purify our veils.
- *Compassion:* one thinks of the sufferings of beings and through various visualizations, which we will examine later, one develops compassion for them. In addition, the genuine form of Chenrezig and his *mantra* impregnate our mind with the compassion of all buddhas because Chenrezig and his *mantra* express this compassion.

- *Devotion:* we address offerings and prayers to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, enabling us to increase our trust and devotion.

- *Mental calming* (Tibetan *shi nay):* during the meditation, the mind remains without distraction on the complete body of the deity or on a detail, a visualized syllable, or the sound of the *mantra* and this allows us to develop mental calm. In addition, the various objects on which the mind can successively meditate prevent the meditator from becoming bored and facilitate progress in meditation.

- *Superior vision* (Tibetan *lha tong):* when the body of Chenrezig clearly appears in our mind, it is, however, devoid of actual entity and material reality, similar to the reflection of the moon on water or an image in a mirror. This body is the luminous radiance of the ultimate Chenrezig who is also the ultimate nature of our mind. Recognizing the empty nature of this appearance is superior vision. .

- *Mahamudra:* the deity is, therefore, appearance-emptIness. But it is not, on the one hand, appearance and on the other hand, emptiness, sometimes appearance or sometimes emptiness. Being an appearance, it does not lose its emptiness; being empty, it does not lose its appearance. It is the union of appearance and emptIness not with the meaning of two things placed sIde-by-side but with the meaning of two things forming the same indissociable reality. To dwell wIthout distraction in this state of union is the simultaneity of mental calm and superior vision. This is also called *mahamudra* and more precisely, in this case, the *"mahamudra of the deity's body."* At the beginning one does not actually experience this state, but having some Idea of it permits us to approach it.

SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS OF THE TWO PHASES

These different points are sufficient in themselves to make clear the usefulness of the Chenrezig meditation. We should, however, add to them a purifying function generated by grace at the deepest level. This is the spiritual energy that charges every element of the meditation.

The appearances as we perceive them do not actually have an existence in themselves. They are produced by our own mind and distorted by the conditioning generated from our *karma.* This conditioning acts at the level of the "potential of consciousness. It leads us to experience manifestation as separated from ourselves, solid, real in itself, and the cause of much suffering. A mind free of this conditioning is a pure mind in which pure appearances manifest, devoid of materiality, gone from the duality of subject-object, and without the mark of conflicting emotions and suffering.

Purification, therefore, should operate at the level of the potential of consciousness; it is there that *vajrayana* meditations act. The actual aim of the phases of creation and completion is to eradicate the totality of conditioning that produces samsaric existence. Existence in *samsara* sequentially

unfolds in the succession of birth, life, and death. From beginningless time, we have had innumerable existences, each following this same pattern: birth, life, and death. The conditionings inscribed by this infinite repetition are extremely strong and tend to ceaselessly recreate the

same process that keeps us prisoners of illusion.

Deity meditation, including the two phases, has, in this context, a triple function:

- to purify us of the conditioning that causes birth in the ordinary form that results from karmic ripening;
- to purify us of the conditioning that produces the appearances of ordinary life, characterized by the grasping of a separate entity and by suffering;
- to purify us of the conditioning that causes ordinary death and to actualize the bodies and wisdoms of awakening.

In this framework, every aspect of the meditation performs a particular purification:

- Before starting the visualization, one thinks that all phenomena in the ordinary and impure form dissolve into emptiness. It is symbolic of the death that preceded this life. This purifies us of the conditioning of death produced in our past lives and prepares us for the actualization of the absolute body *(dharmakaya),* the ultimate nature of mind.
- From emptiness, a lotus, moon disc, and the seed syllable HRI first appear. This corresponds to the union of the three elements that characterize the moment of conception in the womb: the lotus represents the ovum, the moon disc the spermatozoon, and the seed syllable the consciousness coming from the *bardo* and joining with the two material supports. All phenomena, having been first purified by the dissolution into emptiness, are now able to manifest in their pure aspects. In this way, we are purified of the conditioning causing conception.
- Then, the transformation of the seed syllable into the deity corresponds to birth and permits us to be purified of the conditioning that causes it. Thus, the potentialities of the body of emanation *(nirmanakaya)* are brought to ripening.
- One recites praises addressed to the deity and imagines lights coming from Chenrezig's heart that present offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. One visualizes his attributes, clothing, jewels, the celestial palace in which he dwells and the land of pure manifestation surrounding it. We can apply this to the characteristics of our ordinary life from birth to death: our activity, relationships with others, clothing, habits of decoration, living situation, and environment. The corresponding visualizations allow us to purify all the conditioning of our life and prepare us for the actualization of the body of perfect experience *(sambhogakaya).*

- At the end of the phase of creation, the pure land dissolves into the celestial palace, the celestial palace into the deity, the deity into the seed syllable which ultimately dissolves into emptiness. This dissolution symbolizes the death to come. It has the same effect as dissolving the phenomena before the visualization: purification of conditioning that happens at the moment of death and future actualization of the *dharmakaya.*

Therefore, one accomplishes a complete purification and, at the same time, makes possible the emergence of the three bodies of awakening. In reality, our mind is right now and always has been buddha by nature, but the different veils covering it keep this awakened nature in a latent state and prevent it from becoming manifest. When it does manifest, the pure lands and the bodies of the deities that are the true expression of this ultimate nature of mind will reveal themselves.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHASE OF CREATION

Let us now return to the phase of creation. To be complete, it must be endowed with three characteristics:

- clarity of the appearance,
- recollection of the pure meaning,
- pride of the deity.

Clarity of the Appearance

Karmic conditioning is the source for the creation of the world as we perceive it, the external world as well as our own body. These creations are similar to those of a dream, but we have a solid and real perception of their existence. The clarity of the appearance, which is the clarity of the visualization, has the function of disengaging us from this mode of illusory production and of eliminating our fixation on this reality. Although we have already discussed this function in regard to the purification of the potential of consciousness, let us look at it again in terms of the phase of creation.

The world presents itself as a great variety of manifestations: universe, external environment, our living situation, body, clothes, the jewelry we wear, the different colors, and so on. Visualization takes into account this variety and offers an equal variety of divine appearances:

- the universe and external environment are replaced by the visualization of the Land of Bliss where all appearances are beautiful, pure, and produce joy;
- our living situation is supplanted by the visualization of the deity's "precious palace";
- all beings and ourselves take Chenrezig's form;
- clothes and jewelry become the jewels and silks Chenrezig wears;

- the ordinary colors are transformed into the colors of the deity and more particularly into the colors of the body, ornaments, and clothes.

Thus, divine appearances replace ordinary appearances and neutralize our fixation on their reality.

Beginners, however, often have difficulty developing this clarity of appearance and above all, developing an image of the complete deity. One can therefore first visualize specific aspects: the face only, then each of the hands or the rosary, the lotus, jewel, and so on. This way of proceeding will give a certain ease.

Beginners may also experience difficulty seeing the Chenrezig that they visualize and their own mind as being one. In truth, the visualization exists only in our mind and therefore, there is no subject who observes or an observed object. Our habitual tendencies predispose us, even in this case, to maintain the duality of subject-object. It is only after long experience in meditation and with a certain understanding of the nature of mind that the visualization is no longer colored by erroneous notions of subject and object. Temporarily, the beginning meditator can simply consider the visualization as an object that the mind observes and try to make it clear and stable, allowing the mind to become calm.

Recollection of the Pure Meaning

The clarity of the visualization should not become the perception of a divine object that might actually exist materially, even on a plane more beautiful or higher than ours. The deity is simultaneously an appearance yet absent of inherent reality, as an image in a mirror or the reflection of the moon on water. The visualized deity is not of the same nature as a *thanka* or a statue. It is devoid of material existence and at the same time endowed with the qualities of the awakened mind. It is neither material nor inert.

The grasping of material reality in the deity is neutralized by recollection of the pure meaning. This means remembering that every visualized aspect expresses the qualities of awakening as a symbolic relationship. Thus, each detail of Chenrezig has a meaning:

- the white color of his body: he is totally pure, free of any veil;
- a single face: the essence of all phenomena is the same taste;
- the four arms: the "four immeasurables" (immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy, and immeasurable equanimity);
- the two crossed legs in the *vajra* posture: he does not dwell in the extremes of *nirvana* for himself or in *samsara;* he unites compassion and emptiness;
- the jewel he holds in his joined hands at the heart: he accomplishes the benefit of all beings and satisfies their needs;

- the rosary he holds in the right hand: he draws all beings toward liberation;
- the lotus in the left hand: he has compassion for all beings, and in addition, as the lotus grows out of mud without its flower being soiled, Chenrezig works in the world without being stained by conflicting emotions and imperfections;
- the moon disc behind his back: in him love and compassion have attained their fullness;
- the deer skin on his shoulder: the legendary kindness of the deer symbolizes the mind of awakening with all thought turned toward the benefit of beings;
- the different jewels: the richness of the qualities of his awakened mind;
- the five colored silks: the five wisdoms.

In the visualization, the clarity of appearance joined with the understanding of this symbolism allows us to get rid of the material perception of the deity. This does not mean that one must continually recite in one's mind this list of symbolic meanings but one knows and has assimilated them.

Pride of the Deity

Beings relate to their individuality with a strong attachment. The idea of "I" refers to the fact that this reality is deeply anchored in us. This notion of "I," of "I am this one or that one" is a kind of pride at the most basic level.

In meditation, one replaces this ordinary pride by the "pride of the deity"; one engenders the conviction "I am Chenrezig."

Ordinary pride is the base on which conflicting emotions, illusory thoughts, and the ensuing sufferings develop. The pride of the deity helps us to stop these productions. When "I am Chenrezig," I am no longer the one with ordinary desires, aversions, and projects. The impure appearances with which we usually identify ourselves are replaced by pure appearances that are Chenrezig's body, his pure land of manifestation, his *mantra,* and so on.

One may think that replacing an identification—the one of our ordinary individuality—by another—the one of the deity—is not a significant change. The difference is, however, very great. In the first case, there are conflicting emotions and suffering and in the second case, there are none.

Each of the three aspects of the phase of creation has a precise function:

- the clarity of appearance neutralizes the production of ordinary, that is, illusory appearances;

- the recollection of the pure meaning neutralizes the grasping at material existence in the pure appearance of the deity and his land of manifestation;
- the pride of the deity neutralizes the assimilation of an ordinary "I."

These three points are important, but the development of the third is more important than the development of the first two. At a deep level, the pride of the deity allows us to perceive the body of Chenrezig as the expression of the clarity of our mind and as the luminous radiance of his empty nature. Subject and object, emptiness and appearance become indissociable and one remains in this contemplation. This state, of course, cannot be attained quickly. In the beginning, it is sufficient simply to think, "I am Chenrezig."

LEARNING TO VISUALIZE

When one begins to practice the phase of creation, one often has difficulty forming a complete image of the deity. Our efforts are divided: when one visualizes the face, the arms become indistinct; arms in their turn chase away the face; and the legs obliterate the arms. One should, however, keep the mind relaxed and not fight oneself. Practicing in this manner, our ability to visualize will progressively improve.

One should not approach meditation in a rigid and too structured way. Avoid viewing the visualization of Chenrezig as building the wall of a house where each brick is solidly placed on the previous one and doors and windows are materially embedded in place. A good method is the following one:

At the beginning of the meditation, one simply develops the thought "I am Chenrezig" and absorbs oneself in it. When other thoughts arise, bringing one back to the absorption of our ordinary personality, one uses the support of the visualization to regain the idea that one is the deity. For instance, one thinks "I am Chenrezig, therefore, my body is white in color" and one puts one's attention on the whiteness of the body. That allows one to stabilize the mind for awhile. When other thoughts distract us from the white color, then one recalls the implements one holds in the hands, and so on. When stability can no longer be maintained on one part of the visualization, one goes to another: arms, legs, face, and so on. Likewise, our mind becomes accustomed to a certain stability that is wIthout tension, The visualization is then easy and agreeable.

When a little child is seated in the middle of many toys, he does not consider playing with all of them at once. He takes one toy and plays with it for awhile, then when he has had enough, he takes another that he in turn puts away to play with a third, and so on. He has many toys but he does not worry about being able to play with all of them at the same time. He knows they are there, that one toy is enough and when he is bored with it, he can take another.

The meditation of Chenrezig is somewhat similar. One visualizes the face, or one hand, an ornament, a color, and when one's mind is bored, one goes to another detail. The mind then feels

a great ease, endowed with freedom of movement, and free of a weight that exceeds its capabilitIes. This is a very good method of learning to meditate.

Otherwise, one risks starting the visualization worried and tense: "I absolutely must visualize without forgetting anything—body, colors, attributes; may the arms stay in place as well as the legs, and above all, may I not lose the face when I think of the lotus or the rosary ... " The task seems overwhelming and one will be discouraged even before starting!

Suppose that one puts in front of you many tasks that must be accomplished all at once. You will not know where to start; starting one thing, you will worry about not being able to do the others. You will think, "I will never be able to do it. I will never have the time necessary for doing it. It is not possible!" You will not be at ease with the feeling of carrying this enormous burden on your shoulders. But you do not have to approach meditation with the same weight on the mind.

When doing the visualization, we have a certain flexibility and an acceptance of what we can or cannot do; it is our mind that thinks like this. On the contrary, when we wish to have a perfect visualization and then, not being able to accomplish it, we revolt against ourselves or get discouraged, it is still our mind that creates these problems. The mind creates its own ease or difficulty depending on how it approaches things.

One has to be skillful to orient the mind correctly and know how to meditate relaxed and at ease as the little child who plays with whatever suits him for an appropriate time. This is not complicated for him and he has no worries. The thoughts that usually agitate us can be calmed using this same attitude. If, on the contrary, we fixate on the idea that we must not forget "this" and not let "that" disappear, we will only add new worries to our worries and new tensions to our tensions. This is not the goal of meditation.

Methods of Meditation

The meditation of Chenrezig consists of four parts:

- PrelImmaries
- Phase of Creation
- Phase of Completion
- Conclusion.

PRELIMINARIES

The preliminary of the meditation contains two parts: taking refuge and generating the mind of awakening. Both are recIted in the same verse that one repeats three times:

> SANG GYAY CHU DONG TSOK KYI CHOK NAM LA

CHANG CHUB BAR DU DAW NI KYAB SU CHI

DAG GI JIN SOK GYI PAY SO NAM KYI

DRO LA PEN SHIR SANG GYAY DRUB PAR SHO

Until enlightenment, I take refuge

In the Buddha, dharma, and sublime sangha.

Through the merit engendered by the practice of generosity and other perfections,

May I realize awakening for the benefit of beings.



Four Arm Chenrezig

The first two lines apply to taking refuge; the two following ones to the generation of the mind of awakening.

Taking refuge can be done in two ways: without or with visualization.

In the first case, one simply thinks that all the buddhas and bodhisattvas are continually present and that one places oneself under their protection.

In the second, the visualization differs from the "refuge tree" visualization specifically used for the *preliminary practices* where many different figures are simultaneously imagined: lamas, *yidams,* buddhas, *dharma* texts, *sangha* members, and protectors. The method used in the meditation of Chenrezig is referred to as "the tradition of the jewel that gathers all the places of refuge." Here one visualizes only Chenrezig and places oneself under his protection. One thinks that Chenrezig gathers in himself the source lama, the lineage lamas as well as other places of refuge, buddhas, bodhisattvas, *yidams,* and so on.

In both cases one does not take refuge just for oneself but imagines that one takes refuge together with all beings of the universe until each comes to awakening.

The second aspect of the *generation of the mind of awakening* means giving our mind the correct orientation at the threshold of the meditation. One thinks: "I do this practice to be able to liberate all beings from the sufferings of *samsara.* After I have attained the state of Chenrezig, I will continually work for the benefit of beings as he does now."

PHASE OF CREATION

The phase of creation begins with the development of the deity. One visualizes that a lotus in full bloom appears a forearm's length above one's head. Then, on top of the lotus, a moon disc appears on which vertically stands the syllable of white light, HRI. The HRI generates a luminous radiance that spreads in all the directions. One imagines that the light going up is an offering presented to the buddhas and bodhisattvas while the light going down is a stream of compassion that relieves the suffering of ordinary beings. Then the light quickly returns back to the syllable HRI which is transformed into Chcnrezig as he is described in the text and represented on the *thanka.*

Thus, recite:

DAG SOK KA KYAB SEM CHEN GYI

CHI TSU PAY KAR DA WAY TENG

HRI LAY PA CHO CHEN RAY ZI

KAR SAL O ZER NGA DEN TRO

DZAY DZUM TU JAY CHEN GYI ZIK

CHAK SHI DONG PO TAL JOR DZAY

O NYI SHEL TRENG PAY KAR NAM

DAR DONG RIN CHEN GYEN GYI TRAY

RI DAK PAK PAY TO YOK SOL

O PAK MAY PE U GYEN CHEN

SHAP NYI DOR JAY KYIL TRUNG SHUG

DRI MAY DA WA KYAB TEN PA

KYAB NAY KUN DU NGO WOR GYUR

Above myself and all beings of the universe:

A white lotus and moon disc.

On them, the letter HRI from which appears the noble Chenrezig.

His clear and white body emits five colored rays;

He smiles and looks upon us with compassion.

Of his four hands, the two middle ones are joined,

Of the two others, the right holds a crystal rosary,

The left, a white lotus.

Silks and jewels adorn him.

A deer skin covers his shoulder,

The Buddha of Infinite Light crowns his head.

He sits in the vajra posture,

To his back is an immaculate moon disc.

He gathers the essence of all refuges.

One usually does the visualization while reciting the text. However, as long as one does not have a developed practice, one can do the visualization first and recite the text afterwards or first recite the text and then do the visualization.

Next, one recites a short praise three times thinking that one pays homage, together with all beings, to t1w body, speech, and mind qualities of Chenrezig. Recite three times:

JO WO KYON GYI MA GU KU DU KAR

DZOK SANG GYAY KYI U LA GYEN

TUK JAY CHEN GYI DRO LA ZIK

CHEN RAY ZI LA CHAK TSAL LO



The syllable HRI

Lord with white body, stained by no defect,

The perfect Buddha ornaments your head.

You look with the eyes of compassion upon beings.

In front of you, Chenrezig, I bow down.

One thinks then that Chenrezig responds by emitting, with his whole body, rays of light that spread in all directions and purify all appearances:

- the universe becomes the Land of Bliss;
- all beings become Chenrezig;
- all sounds become the *mantra* of Chenrezig;
- all activity of the mind becomes the mind of Chenrezig, the primordial consciousness.

At the same time one becomes Chenrezig. Recite:

DAY TAR TSAY CHIK SOL TAB PAY

PAW PE KU LAY O ZER TRU

MA DAK LAY NANG TRUL SHAY JANG

CHI NU DAY WA CHEN GYI SHING

NANG CHU KYAY DRO LU NGAK SEM

CHEN RAY ZI WANG KU SUNG TUK

NANG DRAK RIK TONG YER MAY GYUR

After praying without distraction,

The body of the noble Chenrezig emits light.

The light dissipates karmically impure appearances and erroneous understanding.

The outer world becomes the Land of Bliss;

The body, speech, and mind of beings

Become the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Lord Chenrezig.

Appearances, sounds, and cognition are united in emptiness.



The mantra
OM MANI PADME HUNG

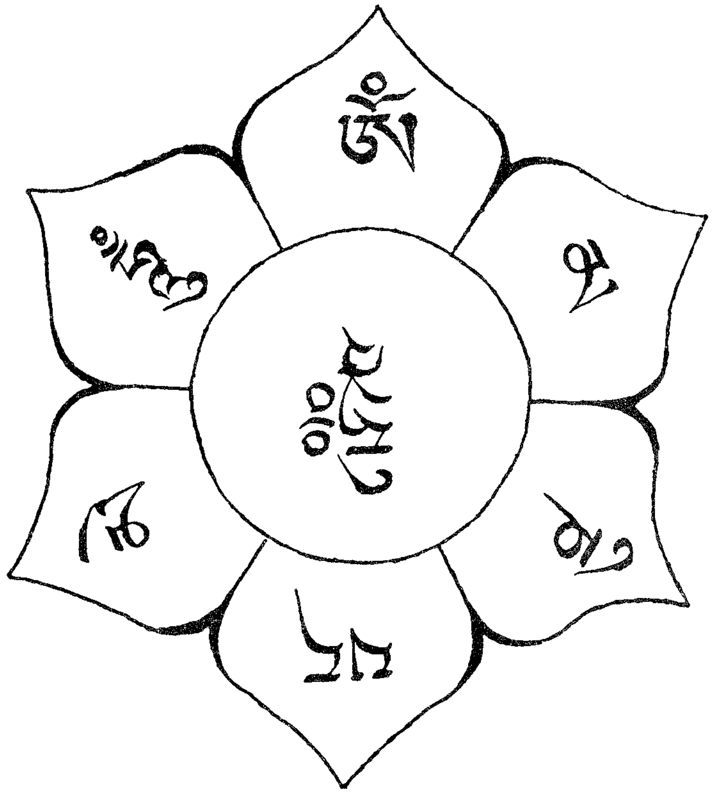
Then one recites the *mantra.*

The recitation of the *mantra* OM MAN! PADME HUNG is done with different visualizations during which one usually imagines oneself in the form of Chenrezig. But beginners, if they experience difficulty with this method, can instead visualize Chenrezig above their head or in the sky in front of them.

Here we will discuss ten visualizations that can be done alternately, without having to go from one to another. It is not necessary to do them in order and one should not consider this list as exhaustive.

VISUALIZATION 1

Concentrate on the appearance of Chenrezig: either on his complete body or on the different elements successively; for instance, the face, then the hands, the arms, diadem, necklaces, bracelets, jewel, lotus, rosary, legs, and so on. In this way, one practices mental calming (shi nay) while developing the capacity to visualize.



The mantra standing on the petals of a lotus in the heart

(In the visualization the syllables stand vertically and face the center. The HRI faces the OM standing on the front petal. For this reason the HRI is upside down.)

VISUALIZATION 2:

Visualize that in the heart of Chenrezig the syllable HRI, white in color, is standing vertically on a moon disc that covers the center of a six petalled lotus. One meditates, keeping the mind resting on the HRI.

VISUALIZATION 3:

Using the previous visualization as a basis, add the six syllables of the *mantra.* They stand vertically on the petals of the lotus, facing the HRI in the center and in order from left to right, starting from OM placed in front. Each syllable is endowed with its own color:

- OM: white
- MA: green
- NI: yellow
- PAD: blue
- ME: red
- HUNG: black.

Concentrate either on the complete visualization or on each syllable successively.

VISUALIZATION 4

The HRI in the heart emits continuous luminous rays that are transformed into agreeable objects, sounds, and smells or take the appearance of auspicious symbols or substances. One thinks that all this is offered to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Then the buddhas and bodhisattvas send us in return their grace and blessing in the form of the same lights that melt into the HRI.

VISUALIZATION 5

From Chenrezig's heart, a white light is emitted that goes to the hells, pacifies all the suffering of beings who are there, gives some coolness to all those who bum, warmth to those who are cold, and transforms the hells into a pure land.

Then the same light spreads to the world of the hungry ghosts, calms their hunger, stems their thirst, and changes this world into a pure land.

Think in the same manner that all the light spreads successively into each of the six worlds of *samsara.* After the hells and hungry ghost worlds, the animals, humans, demigods, and god realms are in turn released from all their suffering and the conflicting emotions that cause it.

VISUALIZATION 6

This is similar to the previous visualization but more elaborate. Visualize light coming from each of the syllables of the mantra standing on the petals of the lotus in the heart. The lights are the same colors as the syllables. The correspondences are as follows:

- OM, white: god realm
- MA, green: demigod realm
- NI, yellow: human realm
- PAD, blue: animal realm
- ME, red: hungry ghost realm
- HUNG, black: hell realm.

VISUALIZATION 7

If one has some comprehension of the superior vision *(lha tong),* one meditates on Chenrezig's body as being devoid of actual entity. It is empty and at the same time an appearance, apparent yet empty, like the reflection in a mirror.

VISUALIZATION 8

Practice mental calming *(shi nay)* using the sound of the recitation of the *mantra* as a support. Without distraction, one meditates with the sound and one's mind being undifferentiated. One can also think that all external sounds are Chenrezig's *mantra.*

VISUALIZATION 9

Meditate that all sounds are perceived as being the *mantra.* They are sound and yet empty; empty while at the same time being sound.

VISUALIZATION 10

When doing the meditation for a sick or dead person, think that the light coming from Chenrezig's heart extends out to the person, relieves this person of suffering, purifies faults and karmic veils, and brings happiness.

In this case, one can visualize Chenrezig above one's head or in space. At the end of the meditation, one imagines that Chenrezig's body melts into the body of the sick or dead person and their bodies, speech, and minds become one.

Among these ten visualizations, the first, second, third, and eighth specifically allow us to establish *shi nay;* the seventh and ninth to practice *lha tong.* The fourth is for the development of devotion; the fifth, sixth, and tenth are more directly related with compassion.

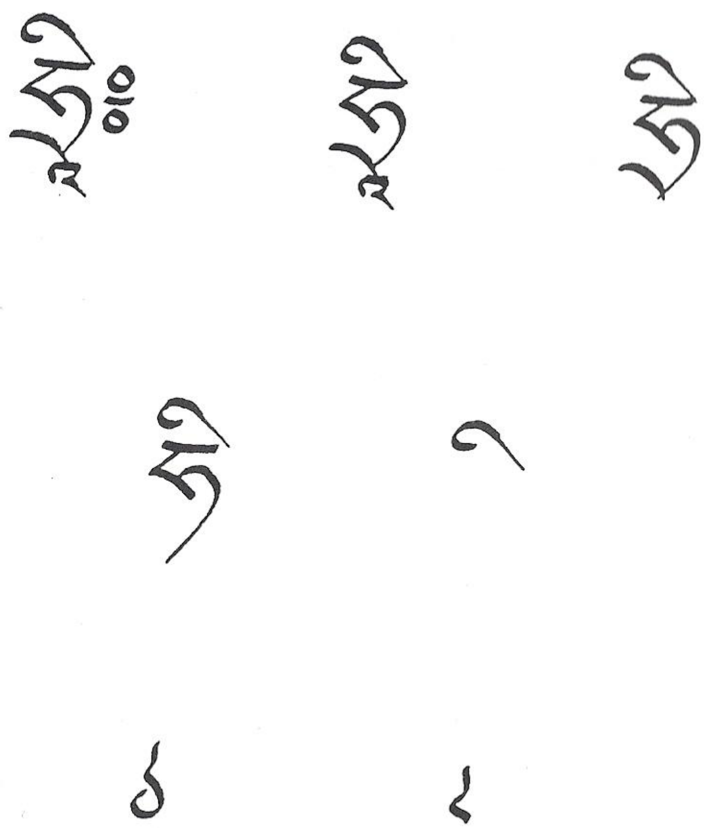
The phase of creation does not have a fixed duration. One continues it for as long as one can or as long as one wishes. During the phase of creation, one may recite one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand, or more *mantras.*

PHASE OF COMPLETION

After one has recited the appropriate number of *mantras,* one proceeds to the completion phase that begins with a progressive dissolution of all the elements of the phase of creation until emptiness:

- The Land of Bliss melts into the beings visualized in the form of Chenrezig;
- These different Chenrezigs dissolve, one into each other, and finally melt into oneself as Chenrezig;
- This final Chenrezig simultaneously dissolves, from the head to the heart and from the feet to the heart, into the *mantra;*
- the *mantra* melts into the HRI;
- the different elements of the HRI dissolve into each other: first the two circles on the right dissolve into the *achung* at the bottom of the syllable;
- then, from the bottom to the top, the *achung* dissolves into the *ratag;*
- the *ratag* into *HA;*
- the HA into the *gigu;*
- the *gigu* becomes a *tig lay* (small point of white light), on top of which is the *nada* (a kind of small spark); - the *tig lay* dissolves into the *nada;*

- the *nada* becomes thinner and thinner and disappears into emptiness[1]



Steps of the HRI Dissolution

If one does not have enough time, instead of this progressive dissolution, one can imagine that all appearances of the phase of creation disappear at once into emptiness.

One then lets the mind rest without visualization and without introducing into the meditation concepts such as: "The emptiness of mind should be this" or "I believe that the mind is also clarity" and so on. One simply remains vigilant without distraction, without either following the thoughts that arise or attempting to stop them, without acceptance or rejection, without hope or fear.

One meditates in this manner as long as one wishes.

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[1] Those who understand Tibetan know the different parts of the syllable. Otherwise, one can refer to the drawing on the following above.

CONCLUSION

After one ends the above meditation, one again thinks one is Chenrezig; all beings are also Chenrezig; the world is the Land of Bliss; all sound is *mantra,* and so on. But now this is only a thought, not a visualization. Recite:

DAG SHEN LU NANG PAK PAY KU

DRA TRAK YI GAY ORUK PE YANG

DREN TOK YE SHAY CHEN PO LONG

My body and other's bodies are the body of Chenrezig,

All sounds are the six syllable melody,

Mental activity is the domain of great wisdom.

One then dedicates the merit of the meditation and wishes that it helps one to attain the same state as that of Chenrezig in order to benefit others. Recite:

GAY WA DI YI NYUR DU DAG

CHEN RAY ZI WANG DRUP GYUR NAY

DRO WA CHIK KYANG MA LU PA

DAY YI SA LA GU PAR SHO

By the virtue of this practice

May I quickly realize the Lord Chenrezig,

Then establish in this state

The totality of beings.

Finally, one recites a short wish to be reborn in the Land of Bliss:

DI TAR GOM DAY GYI PE SO NAM GYI

DAG DANG DAW LA DREL TOK DRO WA KUN

MI TSANG LU DI BOR WA GYUR MA TAK

DAY WA CHEN DU DZU DAY GYAY WAR SHO

KYAY MA TAK TU SA CHU RAB DRU NAY

TRUL PAY CHOK CHUR SHEN DU JAY PAR SHO

By the merit of this meditation and recitation

May I and those related to me,

As soon as we leave this impure body,

Be miraculously born in the Land of Bliss.

Then just after this rebirth, go through the ten grounds

And by emanations, benefit beings in the ten directions.

This ends the brief version of the meditation on Chenrezig. One may include any number of other prayers, but the essentials are contained in this short practice.

Practice in Daily Life

The practice, to be complete, should not be limited to meditation sessions but should be developed in all the activities of life throughout the day as well as at night. We will discuss successively five aspects of this extension of the meditation:

- let appearances be self-liberated,
- let the six sense groups be self-liberated,
- let circumstances be self-liberated,
- practice while sleeping,
- practice while eating.

LET APPEARANCES BE SELF-LIBERATED

Appearances arise having two aspects:

- external appearances—forms, sounds, smells, and so on.
- internal appearances—thoughts and creations resulting from reflection and imagination.

Now we confer an intrinsic reality to these two types of appearance. We perceive them as objects endowed with an actual reality and we also attribute this quality to the subject, the "I." This subject-object duality fixates on appearances and makes them self-captive, bound by our belief in their reality.

How can one be free of these bonds? Let appearances be "self-liberated." This means one does not negate them, but does not affirm them either. Appearances are just what they are, beyond any concept.

To be able to take this middle position, one should understand, as it is said, that the "master of appearances" is the mind. When an appearance arises and we affirm its reality, meaning that we are convinced of its real existence, it is the mind that makes this affirmation. If we negate its reality, it is the mind that makes this negation. Appearances do not affirm or negate themselves; the mind only intervenes to attribute existence or non-existence to them. If we now look at the

essence of the mind itself, we cannot find anything. We are not able to assign any identification to it; this essence is inexpressible, it is empty.

When the mind does not dwell in its essence, we may believe that the appearances actually exist or that they are completely devoid of existence. Even the essence of the person who affirms or negates is not an identifiable object, a "thing" that one can discover. Having no actual existence, it is empty. Therefore one does not fall into eternalism, which is the belief in the mind as an individual entity and in the reality of ego. This does not mean, however, that there is only nothingness, a total non-existence. In this emptiness itself arise all appearances and all thoughts. Therefore one does not fall into the extreme of nihilism.

In this view, free of the two extremes, appearances are self-liberated, the free expression of the emptiness of mind. This is the "**seeing**" of Chenrezig, the Great Compassionate One.

LET THE SIX SENSE GROUPS BE SELF-LIBERATED

Our relation to phenomena is established on the basis of the "six sense groups." Each group is composed of a sense organ, a sense object, and a corresponding consciousness. Thus we have:

- eye, form, visual consciousness;
- ear, sound, auditory consciousness;
- nose, smell, olfactory consciousness;
- tongue, taste, gustatory consciousness;
- skin, touch, tactile consciousness;
- mind, mental object, mental consciousness.

Although, in reality, there is no duality between sense objects and the consciousnesses that grasp them, we establish a separation between subject and object. From that is born a classification of objects (forms, smells, tastes, and so on) into good or bad, agreeable or disagreeable. The notions of attachment or aversion are grafted onto this classification. If one does not recognize the true nature of this attachment and aversion, the six sense groups are self-captive. If one recognizes their true nature, they are self-liberated. Their appearance and liberation occur simultaneously.

When the mind falls under the influence of illusion, attachment pushes us, in effect, to believe that the perceived object is really good; aversion forces us to believe the perceived object is really bad. Phenomena, however, do not affirm any quality by themselves. In fact, it is only the mind that engenders attachment and aversion and assigns classifications. A form, a sound, a smell, or a taste do not designate themselves as agreeable or disagreeable. The mind only adds notions to that which it perceives through the senses and creates the play of attachment and aversion. Since this mind itself is empty and actually free, attachment and aversion are also empty and free in themselves. The six sense groups which are the basis of this process are also empty and self-

liberated. Recognizing the essence of the six sense groups is sufficient to assure their self-liberation without having to act on them.

Letting the six sense groups be self-liberated is the **meditation** of the Great Compassionate One.

LET CIRCUMSTANCES BE SELF-LIBERATED

When we meet circumstances, whether good or bad, in the same manner let them be self-liberated.

Good circumstances are those that produce joy within us: being in the company of friends or people we like, engaging in pleasant conversations, or accomplishing any activIty that bnngs joy to us. We are attached to this joy and attribute reality to it.

When joy appears one should observe the mind that experiences it. It is empty in essence. In this emptiness, notions of friends, pleasant words or sounds and so on do not have any reality. Good circumstances are therefore emptiness. All that appears to us as happiness is devoid of actual identity, self-liberated at the same time it is manifested.

On the other hand, when we are confronted with unfavorable circumstances—being in the company of people who do not like us, being talked to in a disagreeable manner, encountering pain and sickness—if we look at the essence of the mind that experiences these sufferings, we discover that it is empty. In this emptiness, notions of enemies, disagreeable words, sickness and so on do not have any reality. All that appears as suffering is devoid of actual entity, self-liberated at the same time it is manifested.

Happiness and suffering are in fact the dynamic of the empty mind, without actual reality; therefore we do not need to reject or accept them.

Letting circumstances be self-liberated is the **action** of the Great Compassionate One.

These first three aspects are the continuation of the practice we should apply throughout the day.

PRACTICE OF SLEEP

The practice of sleep deals with deep sleep without dreams on the one hand and sleep with dreams on the other. The first is related to the clear light and the second to the reality of appearances.

One first makes the wish to be able to become conscious of the dreams that will arise in one's mind during the coming night.

Then, in order to prepare for the practice of deep sleep, before going to sleep, one visualizes oneself in the form of Chenrezig. One imagines that inside the forehead, at the level of the space between the eyebrows, there is a small sphere of white light on which one puts one's mind. One falls asleep in this way. With the support of this visualization, if one can fall asleep in a state of non-distraction, without thoughts, and with the mind dwelling in emptiness, one establishes the

foundation for recognizing the clear light, first during deep sleep and then at the moment of death. The clear light, properly speaking, assumes that the absence of thoughts is accompanied by consciousness. However, even if we do not actually obtain it, the absence of thoughts and meditation on the sphere of white light facilitates its emergence. In particular, at the moment of death, we will be able to recognize it at the end of the process of manifestation-extension-achievement.

Secondly, the practice of dream can be done by wishing to actually become conscious that we are dreaming during the dream itself. One should try to understand that the dream appearances, at the same they manifest, are devoid of actual entity. They are only a product of the mind. Then one should try to dwell in meditation with this state of recognition. In the same manner, we try to recognize the absence of reality of agreeable or disagreeable sensations, the absence of reality of joys or sufferings we may experience during the dream. Therefore, the self-liberation of dream phenomena occurs. These phenomena continus but we are no longer deceived by thinking they are real.

If one is able, one can also visualize oneself in the form of Chenrezig and recite the *mantra* during the dream. We can do the same meditation during the *bardo* and complete ly liberate ourselves from the appearances of *“the bardo in the nature in itself."*

When waking up in the morning, if one recalls the dreams of the past night, one does not accord them a special meaning. One does not consider beautiful dreams as being good or auspicious or disagreeable dreams as bad or inauspicious. We just remind ourselves that dreams are only illusory manifestations of the mind that is in essence free of these qualifications of "good" or "bad."

Then one thinks that, in reality, the appearances of the waking state are of the same nature as those of the dream. Phenomena, though appearing, do not have an actual identity; they are empty. Where do they come from? They come from the mind that is itself empty in essence. We are talking now of the appearances as being external and the mind being internaL However, "external" and "internal" are misleading distinctions that ultimately do not make sense. When appearances and the mind arise in the pure knowledge of emptiness-clarity, this is the **mind** of the Great Compassionate One. This is the Great Compassionate One himself.

PRACTICE WHILE EATING

During meals one thinks that one is Chenrezig and that all food taken becomes a nectar offered to the deity. Before eating, recite:

JO WO KYON GYI MA GU KU DU KAR

DZOK SANG GYAY GYI U LA GYEN

TU JAY CHEN GYI DRO LA ZIK

CHEN RAY ZI LA CHU PA PUL

Lord with white body, stained by no defect,

The perfect Buddha ornaments your head.

You look with the eyes of compassion upon beings

To you, Chenrezig, I offer this food.

Masters of the Past

We saw how the presence of Chenrezig in this world could take multiple forms, without necessarily having to be identified as a deity. In Tibet, nevertheless, people eagerly tried to detect this presence in a more precise manner and some "emanations" of Chenrezig were designated. King Songtsen Campo and Lama Cyalse Tome are two of the most famous.

Other masters, such as the Indian nun Gelongma Palmo and Kyergangpa are remarkable, not as emanations but because of the particular place that Chenrezig occupied in their lives.

The following brief outline, given in chronological order, describes the life of each of these four masters.

GELONGMA PALMO

First, there is the figure of the nun Gelongma Palmo who lived in ancient India. She was and still is the most well-known because of the extraordinary accomplishments that she obtained through Chenrezig's blessing.

The text entitled *Mani Khabum* reports that she was born into a royal family in North West India. When she was very young she wished to renounce her privileged position as a princess and embrace the monastic life. Later, she contracted leprosy, lost her hands and feet, and was forced to leave the monastery.

Abandoned by her servants in a place far away from people, she lived in a state of great sadness. A dream brought her some consolation. She saw the king Indrabodhi who blessed her and told her: "Practice the meditation of Chenrezig and you will be able to obtain the sublime accomplishment, the realization of the nature of mind. In accordance with this advice, she applied herself to the recitation of OM MANI PADME HUNG during the day and recited the long *mantra* of Chenrezig at night.[2] She also received direct instructions from the *mahasidha,* Lion of Glory, who was well-known for his realization of the Great Compassionate One.

After having practiced a long time, she began to feel a deep weariness. The instructions she was missing were given to her once again in a dream. This time she had a vision of Mansjushri who told

[2] The long *mantra* can be found in the *Nyung Nay* practice text.

her: "Go to Lekar Shinpel and practice Chenrezig. In five years you will obtain realization equal to Tara's."

She therefore went to the place indicated by the deity. There she committed herself not to go away before having obtained the sublime accomplishment. She continued to recite the different *mantras* of Chenrezig and, at the same time, she started to fast completely every other day, refraining from taking food and liquid. This is called Ihe Nyung Nay practice. An extraordinary purification resulted. Through Chenrezig's grace she was completely healed, her limbs fully restored, and she gained the health of a normal young woman. At the same time, her meditation progressed considerably.

At the age of twenty-seven, she obtained the first ground of a bodhisattva and received a prediction from Tara: "You will be able to accomplish the activity of the buddhas of the three times."

Finally, after many years of meditation and asceticism, on the day of the full moon during the third month of theTibetan calendar *(sagadawa),* Chenrezig with eleven faces appeared to her. His body contained all the deities of the four classes of *tantra;* the pores of his skin radiated innu merable pure lands. Gelongma Palmo was filled with wonder. Nevertheless, she said to the deity, "Noble Chenrezig, I did your practice for a long time and with much effort. Why did you take so long to come to me?”

"From the first moment you started to meditate on me," answered Chenrezig, "I was never separated from you. I was continually with you but because of the karmic veils that still covered your mind, you could not see me.”

Then Chenrezig gave her his grace and new instructions. She obtained all the qualities of the tenth ground of a bodhisattva, becoming the same as the Great Compassionate One himself.

The memory of Gelongma Palmo has remained present in Tibet, particularly through the Nyung Nay practice with which she is associated. Many people still perform this practice today.

SONGTSEN GAMPO

In Tibet the first person to be considered an emanation of Chenrezig was the king Songtsen Gampo who reigned in the land of snow during the first half of the seventh century of our era. His greatness principally rests on introducing Buddhism into his country.

The *Mani Khabum* relates that his incarnation manifested the will of Chenrezig in the form of a mighty monarch to guide the Tibetan people. Chenrezig had perceived their maturity through his divine eye.

It is said that at the moment of his conception he entered his mother’s womb as a sun ray. All the buddhas and bodhisattvas then knew that Chenrezig was emanating on earth for the benefit of the Tibetans. The same night his mother, the queen, saw in a dream her body emitting rays of light

spreading in all directionls while gods and goddesses presented offerings. She also saw the sun and moon coming as an umbrella to shelter her and many flowers forming a rug. She then experienced non-conceptual clarity.

When the child was born, everyone saw the wonderful signs with which he was marked; in particular, his skull was crowned by a small head of Amitabha buddha. Later the traditional iconography came to represent the king with a hat whose function it is to hide this head.

Such were the conception and birth of the king who, although born into a *bon* family, converted to Buddhism and introduced the compassion and gentleness of this tradition to a country then reputed for its barbarity.



Songtsen Gampo, in addition to his strictly political activities, established an alphabet for the Tibetan language through his minister Thonmi Sambhota. This alphabet was derived from Sanskrit. He also built the Potala palace and the Jokhang sanctuary.

Through the figure of Songtsen Gampo who was Chenrezig in person, we can better understand the special link that unites Tibetans to their favorite deity.

KYERGANGPA

Kyergangpa, a lama who lived in the twelfth century, was the third holder of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage after Khyungpo Naljor and Mochokpa. He had a particular devotion for Chenrezig and we will see that his experience reminds us of Gelongma Palmo's.

"I now have a precious human existence," he thought. "I should not exhaust it in vain but give to it full meaning. I should use it to obtain awakening and accomplish the benefit of beings. To attain this goal, I take the commitment to continually do the Chenrezig practice."

After making this promise, he retired to a hermitage. Day and night he did the meditation of Chenrezig and recited his *mantra.*

Chenrezig appeared to him after three and half years of retreat. Kyergangpa then told him: "For three and a half years I deprived myself of food and sleep; withollt interruption, I recited your *mantra* and did your meditation. Why was I not able to see you before now:'"

"Two obstacles prevented you from seeing me," answered Chenrezig. "The first was the karmic veils accumulated in your mind since bcginninigless time. Progressively, the meditation freed you of them. The second was the hope that you had of seeing me. You meditated and recited, expecting me to appear while fearing you would not be able to obtain this result. Hope and fear are two great obstacles. In fact, from the third day of your retreat, I was present in the hermitage, and we have not been separated a single moment since then. But it is only now that the two obstacles have been removed."

GYALSE TOME

A contemporary of the third Karmapa, Ranjung Dorje (first half of the fourteenth century), Gyalse Tome, is also known as Tome Zangpo, the "good Tome." He was the author of a famous text entitled the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* as well as other texts. Unanimously seen by Tibetans as an emanation of Chenrezig, he was a presence of the Great Compassionate One among humans.

He was born in Tsang province and it is said that his birth was marked by a shower of flowers and by wonderful signs.

As an infant, he naturally manifested much love and affection for humans and animals. Like many children his age, he was in charge of looking after sheep and yaks. However, his mind was so preoccupied by the dharma that one day, abandoning the herd, he ran away to study with a lama. He then took monastic vows and received the name Zangpo Pal.

During these years, he studied the great subjects of Buddhist philosophy, the *vinaya, prajnaparamita* and *madhyamika.* It is said that he had knowledge of all the texts that had been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. His erudition was immense.

Rather than confining himself to abstract intellectualizing, he had a constant concern for the sick, the poor, and the beggars. He ceaselessly tried to relieve them of their sufferings. It is reported that when he took the bodhisattva vows—the commitment to attain awakening for the benefit of beings—the earth shook and rainbows illuminated the whole of space.

He then practiced the *six junctions* of *Kalachakra.* The lama who instructed him revealed that during many existences he had Chenrezig as his principal meditation deity. He gave him several Chenrezig initiations as well as numerous instructions for the practice.

Every day he did one hundred prostrations, one hundred circumambulations around a stupa and recited the praise to Tara twenty-one times. He spent twenty years of his life in retreat doing the *Nyung Nay* practice and meditating on *bodhicitta.*

One day he had a vision of Chenrezig with eleven faces that caused the birth of a deep realization of emptiness-compassion in his mind. Trewo Tekden, one of the great disciples of the third Karmapa, told him, Chenrezig, the Great Compassionate One is neither a fresco on a wall nor a figure on a *tangka.* Chenrezig is, when born in the mind of a being, the compassion-emptiness spreading to all beings with as much ardor as the love of a mother for her only child." When he expressed this, he was, in fact, referring to Gyalse Tome himself, considering him as one and the same with the ultimate Chenrezig.

In all circumstances Gyalse Tome looked at his own defects. He never spoke of the faults of others but only valued their qualities. The love and compassion in him were so strong that they naturally calmed the minds of people in the surrounding area. Even animals lost their fear and aggressiveness. Wild animals, deer, birds, dogs, and cats seemed to forget their mutual hostility. He distributed all his wealth to the needy, not seeking to preserve anything for his own use. He gave away his clothes and even the carpet on which he was sitting if he saw that a poor being needed it.

Several of his disciples who had pure *karma* truly saw Chenrezig in him.

His biography is amazing if one considers the number of years he spent in retreat, the time he dedicated to teaching, and the numerous texts he composed. Any one of these activities would be sufficient to fill a lifetime.

All the lamas of his time had much faith and respect for him and he had innumerable disciples.

These life stories are only a few of the more famous ones. Throughout the history of Tibet and even today, many great masters have maintained a privileged link with Chenrezig.

Conclusion

In this book we saw the many beneficial functions of the Chenrezig meditation. To conclude let us cite the exact words of Buddha explaining the benefits of the *mantra.*

"OM MANI PADME HUNG is the heart of the wisdom of all buddhas. It is the quintessence of the five families of buddhas and masters of the secret path. The instructions that embody each of the six syllables are the source of all qualities and blessings, the root of all beneficial and happy accomplishments, and the great path toward superior existences and liberation.

"Hearing, even if only once, the six syllables of the perfect word, the heart of all *dharma* will allow one to attain the state of no-return and to become a boatman who liberates beings. Beyond that, if an animal, even an ant, hears this *mantra* before dying, it will be reborn in the Land of Bliss once liberated from this existence. As the sun melts the snow, recalling these six syllables, even just once, takes away every fault and every veil caused by harmful acts accumulated in the cycle of existence since eternity and leads to rebirth in the Land of Bliss. Just touching the letters of the *mantra* gains the initiation of innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas. Contemplating it, even once, makes hearing, reflecting, and meditating effective. Appearances reveal themselves to be *dharmakaya*, and the treasure of activity for the benefit of beings opens."[3]

[3] From the *Continual Shower for the Benefit of Beings.*



Chenrezig Lord of Love

Principles and Methods of Deity Meditation

Bokar Rinpoche

The Tibetan Buddhist practices of meditation are part of the spiritual wealth of humanity and deity meditation forms the heart of this treasure. For over a millennium Tibetan lamas have used meditation on deities as a means to master the inner world.

Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara in Sanskrit), the deity that represents the loving and compassionate potential of the mind, is the most popular deity of Tibet. In this volume a great teacher, Bokar Rinpoche, gave detailed instructions for this practice. He specifically addressed the concerns of Western practitioners in offering these unique teachings.

Chenrezig is within us because love and compassion are not qualities added to the mind. These qualities are part of the awakened state even if for the moment this state exists only as a potential for us.

Bokar Rinpoche was born to a family of nomads in Western Tibet in 1940. Recognized at four as the reincarnation of the previous Bokar Rinpoche by the Sixteenth Karmapa, he studied at Bokar and Tsurpu Monasteries. He left Tibet for India at twenty and completed two three-year retreats under the guidance of the great Tibetan master, Kalu Rinpoche. Because of his remarkable qualities and deep realization, he succeeded Kalu Rinpoche as head of the Shangpa Kagyu Lineage. He taught advanced Vajrayana practice at monasteries in Northern India and Buddhist centers throughout the world.